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CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Pearls of Wisdom ... ... ... ... ... | 145 |
| Passing of the Third Floor ... ... ... ... | 146 |
| Gandhiji and the Gita ... ... ... ... ... <br> *By Diwan Bahadur K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, B.A., B.L.* | 149 |
| Indian Culture ... ... ... ... ... <br> *By Sir S. Radhakrishnan* | 153 |
| The Problem of Prohibition ... ... ... ... <br> *By Rajasevasakta Prof. A. R. Wadia* | 157 |
| Karma Cannot be Hoodwinked ... ... ... ... <br> *(A Story)* | 161 |
| To the Winds ... ... ... ... ... <br> *By Tandra Devi* | 163 |
| Reviews and Notices ... ... ... ... ... | 165 |
| News and Reports ... ... ... ... ... | 166 |

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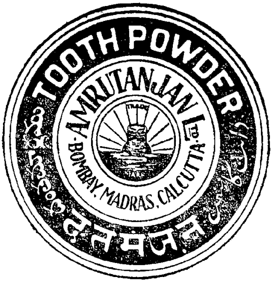

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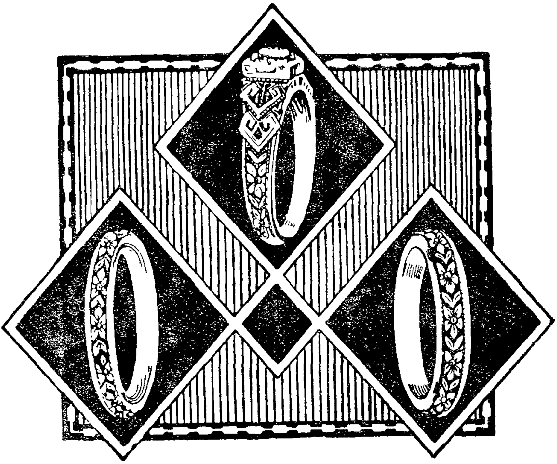

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# The Vedanta Kesari

VOLUME XXXII NUMBER 7

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## PEARLS OF WISDOM

यस्मिन्निदं प्रोतमशेषमोतं
पटो यथा तन्तुवितानसंस्थ ।
य एष संसारतरुः पुराणः
कर्मात्मकः पुष्पफले प्रसूते ॥

—*Hindu Scripture.*

On the Lord this entire universe rests even as a cloth on the network of its threads. This tree of *Samsara* (the universe with its birth and death) is ancient; activity is its nature; and it produces flowers (experience and emancipation) and fruits.

'Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God'. God, then, has promised to show Himself to us. Let us reflect on what that beauty of His must be! He made all these beautiful things that you see and love. If they are beautiful, then what must He be! If they are great, how great must He be! From a consideration, then, of these things which we love here, let us rather yearn for Him, and despising other things, let us Love him.

—*St. Augustine.*

The whole diversity of natural things can have arisen from nothing but the ideas and the will of one necessarily existing Being, who is always and everywhere God supreme, infinite, ommipotent, omniscient, absolutely perfect.

—*Isaac Newton.*

# PASSING OF THE THIRD FLOOR

'My body is a teacher of mine', says the Avadhuta in the *Bhagavata.* 'Being subject to birth and death which always bring pain in their wake, it is the cause of dispassion and discrimination.' We have heard that the One who dwells in this body, the ruler of this nine-gated city can teach, nay, he is the teacher of teachers. But can the body also teach? Not by itself; for it has no voice of its own—though most of us may refuse to be convinced of this truth. Yet it can be eloquent as the royal palace is of the Majesty it houses, and that is saying a great deal. We die physically and mentally many times before our deaths and are reborn; but how many of us learn the lesson of dispassion? In the throes of a 'half-death' some of us, the more credulous, unable to bear the weight of pain, reach out our hands for God to come to our aid, as Jesus did on the Cross; others in a gust of righteous anger for God's painful yoke repudiate Him. Very often even such pain does not bring about a birth, the birth of knowledge. To the rational among us 'half-deaths' are occasions for self-searching and stock-taking, often leading to a 'birth'. The thought flashes across their minds that though this body is vulnerable to disease and death, it is a fertile field for experiments with truth, is the scene for the harvest of the saving knowledge that the indweller of the body is invulnerable and is the ever-shining Light in the body. This mixed wave of dispassion and knowledge is just the raw-material for further enquiry and refinement. To help us to preserve our poise and say 'welcome' when adversity next knocks at our door, our Hindu ancients have exhorted us to capitalise untoward experiences by tracing them to their very roots and rebuilding a 'mental mould' which can mint from the ore of the opposites of pain and pleasure, coins of poise and philosophic calm.

The enquiry proceeds thus: The opposites of pain and pleasure that often make us lose our hold on ourselves do not belong to our inner selves: firstly, for the simple reason that opposites cannot be the qualities of one and the same thing. They are not part and parcel of our real selves: they come and go. Nevertheless, they *affect* us—a point in our favour—which is to say that they are extraneous to us. Only a thing other than ourselves can affect us.

Now then, do these belong to the things which cause the rise of pleasure and pain in us. The answer must be in the negative; for we have seen one and the same thing becoming the source of happiness and misery to us. Thus in the array of the three factors of an experience, the object, our sense-body and the indweller, the first and last have been eliminated. The sense-body amalgam is left as the field for the play of opposites. And it must be so: Being a true chip of Nature, the romantic mother of all opposites, courage and timidity, lethargy and industry, ignorance and knowledge, the body has to hold up the mirror for these opposites. Nature with her dexterous yet saving hands has built the body by bricks hewn from her three quaries, and has provided us with three flats, one to sleep, one to work and the third, at the top, quite airy and well-ventilated, to meditate. Not that the bottom one can be used only for sleeping and the top one only for meditation. Of course, we don't use our meditation rooms for sleeping; and if we are to use our sleeping apartments for meditation a lot of cleaning and rearrangement has to be done. As it is, we get on the first floor an ill-ventilated room, rather stuffy, with a lot of 'subterranean subtleties' which a Johnson would have relished, old and tasteless rations which will increase our sluggishness and never make us active. We can conduct our worship there; but our vision will be clouded. We may resort to self-torture or direct our powers towards ruining others. In the second floor we get very pungent viands, excessively sour or hot which irritate our bowels and heat our bodies and push us into pits of rash and thoughtless

speech and action. There our worship becomes showy and ostentatious, our minds hovering round worldly gains of name and fame. The third floor is airy and presents us with energising and healthy foods that are juicy, substantial and agreeable which reap cheerfulness and sustaining strength. Here distractions are much less and conditions for meditation very good. Concentration is easily attained and we do not seek low ends in prayer, but fix our minds on good-heartedness, self-control, purity of nature. Hence there we don't indulge in excited talk or discussion; our speech is pleasant and beneficial. Once we spend some time on the top floor, we begin to like spending more time and even climb over to the terrace of the house from where we can look on the world. But in spite of ourselves, we are drawn by something to the lower flats. We slip into inertia and anger and feel sorry for it. We walk into parlours of hot rations, and hotter altercation and repent for it. Can we steer clear of these pitfalls and be always on the top floor is the eternal question of our every-day lives. Perhaps we cannot; for the Gita says that even the gods have got to divide their time between these three flats of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Perhaps we can; for man has in him something which can outstrip even the gods!

One fact emerges from the foregoing description of the three-storeyed house Nature has built for us: that we, the real we, *own* the house. We can climb to the top storey of the house, high up, higher than the trees, nearer to the stars and take a long view of things and philosophise, or come to the dingy ground-floor and be covered up in sleep; or come out of the house, stand apart and inspect the house as a bystander. In non-attachment, spiritual courage and other virtues the bystander's position is equally rich as that on the terrace. If on the terrace we gain a vertical height, as a bystander we stand to gain a horizontal length. Often do we get glimpses of such sublime possibilities and feel sorry for not enjoying it oftener; but we seldom return to it. Instead we totally mix up things, owner and house, matter and spirit in one amorphous blend. The result is that the house suffers occasional dilapidation either by floods underground or by lightning strokes from above and the owner soon becomes a 'nervous wreck.'

All real philosophy, religion and art must help man to get established in the consciousness that he is the 'master of the house'. This is the same as rising above body-consciousness, same as passing the relative universe and coming by the absolute experience in the realm of light, peace and strength. 'We know of no other relative universe' says Sri Sankara, 'than that of the body and the senses'. So all the *sadhana* that philosophy, art and religion can prescribe is directed towards making man light enough to ascend not only to the plane of sattva, but even to pass beyond it. For even on the plane of sattva we are not completely free: we are bound by a golden chain. Bhagavan Sri Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna to go beyond the three gunas stresses this point. Beyond sattva lies freedom, equilibrium and poise the experience *par excellence*. The whole truth is brought out beautifully in the pithy symbolical story of Sri Ramakrishna who compares the three gunas to three robbers. The robbers waylay the wayfarer-man, bind him to a tree and dispossess him of his belongings. Tamas and rajas even beat him; but sattva unbinds him, takes him to the village of his destination. Man is full of gratitude for the sattva-robber and he invites sattva to partake of his hospitality at his house. Sattva replies that he has no entry into the village of realization and that man has to go alone. Beyond sattva lies our real home of eternal sunshine; the path is lonely and is an adventure.

The path of philosophy may appear smooth. It asks us to be a mere witness of the whole show. It says that the universe infested with change and riddled with contradictions is a chimera. The witness within you is the only Reality and Truth. Realise this and be happy. The language of religion is more understandable to the average man. It says

that the world is God's creation and this body of ours is the *temple* of God. Some corners of the temple need careful cleansing. Of the three rooms we have mentioned, no room is to be neglected. Rather religion would have the partitions removed and it turned into one common hall so that the fragrance of incense and flowers from the meditation room spreads all over a sanctity and the chant of stotrams awaken even the sleeping corners. To achieve this the *Devi Bhagavata* gives a very helpful recipe: 'The consort of rajas is sattva; the consort of sattva is rajas; the consort of sattva and rajas is said to be tamas. These gunas are help-mates of one-another. They mutually exist and co-exist. Here is a meditation that is of immense value in the work of refining the base metal of our tamasic and rajasic nature into the gold of sattva. The sense that sattva is something high and tamas something low must go. All are parts of one whole. Sattva then comes down with ease to the killing, stealing, lying, incontinent, and impure old Adam of the lower apartments and refines him by restoring to him the habits of non-injury, truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-acceptance of gifts, as also purity, contentment, austerity, study of the Vedas and meditation of God. To acquire these virtues is to reap the whole harvest of Religion. To this end the practice of the Yamas and Niyamas enumerated above must be supported and reinforced by a deep faith in, and prayer to, God. We have to pray to him constantly for withdrawing from us the *fata morgana* of His Maya, the illusion that tosses us between these three gunas. With His help we can easily pass the third floor and climb to the top.

True art also aims at transforming our baser emotions into the gold of sattva by catharsis. The function of tragedy, said Aristotle is purification by the purging of our base metal, by catharsis. The science of Aesthetics in India has from early times insisted that the function of true art, music, painting or architecture must be to lift man from the animal plane to the supersensible apperception of the Infinite where the world, himself and even the art are sublated into the one whole experience of the Beautiful. Modern psychology speaks in a similar strain when it says that the regeneration of man is to be achieved by joining the Unconscious (the store house of all psychological basemetal) to the Superconscious, where the former will be turned into gold, where the iron and brass of instincts will be changed into the gold of wisdom. A thousand men with enough of this gold in them and we would have ushered in a new civilization, a new age. Such gold-men must be at the top of society, so that they can by their leaven convert the lower strata of iron and brass into gold.

Even as we cannot one fine morning jump out of the three chambers of our being or to use another metaphor, as we cannot turn overnight the iron of tamas and the silver of rajas into the gold of sattva, human society cannot—the hard lesson is being taught to us to-day—change its iron and silver-men into gold-men. Shall we acquiesce with Plato and say with him, 'Citizens you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. Some of us are made of gold, some of silver, (to be auxiliaries) and some of brass and iron'? Or shall we with faith in the divinity of man, invoke the gold - in the gold-men? But alas! gold is woefully at a discount today.

To-day unfortunately we value iron more than gold, for iron can make the nerves and sinews of war. Ours is a *chauffeur* civilization with its god as speed. There is a prophetic utterance in the Gita which says that when man becomes deluded by the energies of Nature he is attached to the functions of the energies in his body. Science has brought him disrespect for Nature and confusion regarding her energies with the result that his inner value chess-board has been upset. He values the silver of rajas more than the gold of sattva. When we have to bypass even the gold of sattva to reach our destination will we be satisfied with silver? We have to get on to the terrace and gain a total view leaving behind the third floor: shall we linger on the second floor and clamour for small gains is the question our modern civilization has yet to answer.

# GANDHIJI AND THE GITA

*By Diwan Bahadur, K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, B.A., B.L.*

Mahatma Gandhi said some years ago in beautiful and well known words, 'Today the Gita is not only my Bible or my Koran. It is more than that—it is my mother. I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago, but this *eternal mother* has completely filled her place ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed. When I am in difficulty or distress I seek refuge in her bosom. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the *Bhagavadgita.* Elsewhere Gandhiji says, '......... I find a solace in the *Bhagavadgita* and Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. (*Young India* 6-8-'25) It (Gita) simply describes the progress of the pilgrim soul towards the supreme goal. (*Harijan.* 15.12.'36.)

Mahatma Gandhi has described thus the goal of humanity as described in the Gita: 'Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self.realisation. This self-realisation is the subject of the Gita as it is of all scriptures'.

Gandhiji, however, points out that the most unique and valuable portion of the Gita is its teaching about the *sadhana* (the means) of the attainment of God-realisation. He says, 'The object of the Gita appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realisation. That matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of action'. He says further, 'This desirelessness is the central sun around which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets'. He asks, 'How can the body be made the temple of God? In other words, how can one be free from the taint of sin? The Gita has answered the question in decisive language: 'By desireless action; by renouncing fruits of action, by dedicating all activities to God, *i.e*, by surrendering oneself to Him body and soul.' Without desireless action there is no real *jnana* or *bhakti.* And what is the real meaning of the reward of action? Gandhiji says, 'He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto and the capacity for it. He who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of action. Again, let no one consider renunication to mean want of fruit for the renouncer. The Gita does not warrant such a meaning. Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. As a matter of fact, he who renounces reaps a thousandfold.'

Gandhiji has made clear another great truth when he says that such renunciation will become perfect only through right knowledge and that right knowledge will become ours only through devotion to God. Thus there is a vital element of *bhakti* and *jnana* in *nishkama karma.* He says, 'But desirelessness or renunciation does not come from the mere talking about it. It is not attained by an intellectual feat. It is attainable only by a constant heart-churn. *Right knowledge is necessary for attaining renunciation.........*In order that knowledge may not run riot, the author of the Gita has insisted on devotion accompanying it and has given it the first place. Therefore says the Gita, 'have devotion and knowledge will follow'. This devotion is not mere lip-worship; it is wrestling with death. Hence the Gita's assessment of the devotee's qualities is similar to that of the sages'. It is important to remember that the qualities of poise and self-control, of same-sightedness, compassion and altruism, of renunciation and devotion are described in the Gita as characteristics of each of the four yogas.

Mahatma Gandhi gives us clear ideas about the essence of the teaching of the Gita in regard to the four yogas. About the yoga of devotion he says, 'Thus the devotion required by the Gita is no soft-hearted effusiveness. It certainly is not blind faith. The devotion of the Gita has the least to do with externals. A devotee may use, if he likes, rosaries, forehead marks, make offerings, but these things are no test of his devotion'. Similarly knowledge is not a mere state of the intellect but is wisdom and intuition. Raja yoga is not mere control of the body and the senses and the mind but the supreme meditation resulting in the at-one-ment of the soul and the Oversoul. Karma yoga is not the mere doing of karma in a spirit of renunciation of fruit, but is also the doing of karma as an act of worship to God.

Another great truth which he makes clear is his exaltation of the yogas—of the means of perfection which are themselves the foretaste of perfection and which culminate in perfection. He says,'self-realisation is not something apart. One rupee can purchase for us poison or nector, but knowledge or devotion cannot buy us either salvation or bondage. These are not media of exchange. These are themselves the things we want. In other words, if the means and the end are not identical, they are almost so. The extreme of means is salvation. Salvation of the Gita is perfect peace'. Such perfect peace and bliss will come only as the result of our efforts blessed by His Grace. Gandhiji says well, 'Unwearied, ceaseless effort is the price that must be paid for turning that faith into rich, infallible experience.'

Equally important is his stress on the need for the spiritualisation of the whole life. He points out that the Gita has not separated the worldly life from the life spiritual. 'In my opinion', he observes, 'the author of the Gita has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between salvation and worldly pursuits. On the contrary, he has shown that religion must rule even our worldly pursuits. I have felt that the Gita teaches us that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion'.

Thus Mahatma Gandhi has thrown new light on the Gita by trying to apply its external teachings to the needs of modern India and the modern world. I do not think that the older interpreters did anything more than apply its external teachings to the needs and problems of their age. Indeed the earliest interpretations are by Sri Krishna himself as described in the *Anugita* and in Skandha XI of the *Bhagavata*. My feeling is that even while applying the basic ideas of the Gita to the problems of each age we must walk in the light of the Upanishads of which the Gita is the essence and we must harmonise all the portions of the Gita *inter se* bearing in mind Sri Krishna's words in the *Anugita* and the *Bhagavata* while trying to understand His teachings in the Gita.

Applying such a test it seems to me that while Mahatma Gandhi has taken an attitude wider than the narrow attitude taken up by Lokamanya Tilak in his *Gita Rahasya*, he has taken an attitude which has narrowed the range of the teachings of the Gita while widening it so as to apply the lessons of the Gita to the complex problems of modern life. By making Karma yoga the only path to God-head, Tilak may have done good to a supine and *tamasic* people who are in bondage and who have no vision of a free, happy, prosperous life; but he has narrowed unduly and given a partial and distorted version of a great world-gospel which is the scripture for all times and climes. To open wide a gate which had been left closed and uncared for one ought not to close other gates. Mahatma Gandhi sees and says that God-realisation is the goal of life and that God-realisation is the supreme self-realisation and that the self or soul is infinite and has no real ties to its body-cage. He says, 'The soul is omnipresent; why should she care to be confined within the cage like body, or do evil and even kill for the sake of that cage? We thus arrive at the ideal of total renuncia-

tion, and learn to use the body for the purposes of service as long as it exists, so much so that service and not bread, becomes with us the staff of life. We eat and drink, sleep and wake, for service alone. Such an attitude of mind brings us real happiness and the beatific vision in the fulness of time'. He has not narrowed the universal teaching of the Gita when he says that the central teaching of the Gita is *Anasakti yoga* or selfless action, though, there is no point in giving us a new word like *anasakti* in the place of the old word *nishkama karma*.

Another narrowing of the universal teaching of the Gita by Mahatma Gandhi is his attempt to put it within the limits of his magical formula of non-co-operation and ahimsa. He says, 'I venture to submit that the *Bhagavadgita* is a gospel of non-coperation between the forces of darkness and those of light......Prahlad dissociated himself from his father, Meerabai from her husband, Bibhishana from his brutal brother'. It is not relevant to discuss here the ethics of non-co-operation. The Gita has nothing to do with co-operation or non-co-operation. The instances of Prahlad and Meerabai and Vibhishana merely show that when human authority is misused for denying the exercise of the primary right which is also the primary duty, of God-love and God-realisation, we shall be unfaithful to our primary duty and unmindful of our primary right if we do not oppose such human tyranny. The Gita tells us the universal principles of human life and conduct. We must look elsewhere for guidance when the exercise of such principles is hindered or impeded by man-made institutions.

Certainly, the principles of Truth and non-violence are lofty principles, but we must settle their place in a hierarchy of spiritual values and we must have precise ideas about them. *It is rather difficult* to say what exactly Gandhiji means by Satya or Truth. It looks as if he means God-head, but he has not given us any precise ideas about the nature and attributes of God-head. 'To one who doubts even Truth', says Gandhiji, 'the scriptures have no meaning. No one can contend with him. There is danger for the man who has failed to find ahimsa in the scriptures, but he is not doomed. Truth—Sat—is positive; non-violence is negative. Truth stands for the fact; non-violence negatives the fact. And yet non-violence is the highest religion. Truth is self-evident; non-violence is its maturest fruit. It is contained in truth, but as it is not self-evident a man may seek to interpret the Sastras without accepting it But his acceptance of Truth is sure to lead him to the acceptance of non-violence'. (*Young India*, 12th Nov. 1925).

I have already referred to Gandhiji's view of Satya or Truth. Regarding his concept of ahimsa, it seems to me that he is trying to justify in two ways his view that ahimsa is the central teaching of the Gita. He says that Vyasa teaches by the epic of the *Mahabharata* that the war ended only in the wholesale slaughter on both sides and that violence was a futility and emptiness. He then proceeds to say, 'That the central teaching of the Gita is not himsa but ahimsa is amply demonstrated by the subject begun in the second chapter and summarised in the concluding (XVIIIth chapter). The treatment in the other chapters also supports the position. Himsa is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred, and the Gita strives to carry us to the state beyond Satva, Rajas and Tamas, a state that excludes anger, hatred etc. But I can even now picture to my mind Arjuna's eyes red with anger everytime he drew the bow to the end of his ear'. He then proceeds to argue out his theory of non-violence: 'It was not in a spirit of ahimsa that Arjuna refused to go to battle. He had fought many a battle before. Only this time he was overcome with false pity. He fought shy of killing his kith and kin. *Arjuna never discussed the problem of* killing as such. He did not say that he would kill no one, even if he regarded him as wicked. Sri Krishna knows everyone's innermost thoughts and he saw through the temporary

infatuation of Arjuna'. He then gives a strange but telling example: 'He therefore told him: "Thou hast already done the killing. Thou canst not all at once argue thyself into non-violence. Finish what thou hast already begun". If a passenger going by a Scotch Express gets suddenly sick of travelling and jumps out of it, he is guilty of suicide. He has not learnt the futility of travelling or travelling by a railway train. Similar was the case with Arjuna. Non-violent Krishna could give Arjuna no other advice. But to say that Gita teaches violence or justifies war, because advice to kill was given on a particular occasion, is as wrong as to say that himsa is the law of life because a certain amount of it is inevitable in daily life. To one who reads the spirit of the Gita, it teaches the secret of non-violence, the secret of realising the self through the physical battle'. (*Young India*, 12-11-1925)

It appears to me that the basic error in Gandhiji's visualisation of ahimsa is that he confuses the absolute ahimsa of the ascetic and the yogin with the qualified and relative ahimsa—appearing as himsa—of the person who not being a yogin who has taken a *mahavrata* or absolute vow of ahimsa, is violently resisting violence used for destroying the freedom of the country or the honour of women or the lives of children. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* say that before a person who has accomplished such *mahavrata*, beasts that are inimical by nature give up their enmity. In the *Ramayana* the sages who have made such a vow of absolute non-violence seek the protection of Rama who thereupon swear that he will destroy the evil-doers in order to protect the non-violent righteous sages. When later on Sita protests to Rama against such violence Rama explains in clear and unmistakable words (Kanda X, 3, 4, 17, 19) the ordinary duty of defensive and protective violence.

It seems to me that the same truth is taught in the Gita as well as elsewhere in the Hindu Scriptures. Arjuna was not an ascetic or yogin with the vow of total non-violence. He is called upon to fight the evil-doers in a spirit of detachment, in a spirit of renunciation for the fruits of action, as an offering to God, in a spirit of worship to God. Gita says that such action done in a spirit of *yajna* will not be the source of sin or cause of bondage. Is this the preaching of violence? Absolute non-violence is the supreme spiritual path. But in the case of all except yogins and saints who have taken up the *mahavrata* of total non-violence, defensive himsa of the kind described above is only an incarnation of ahimsa and is the source of *sreyas* and any falling off from it would be a source of sin.

Mahatma Gandhi himself seems to feel in his heart of hearts that his gospel of non-violence goes beyond Hinduism. He says, 'I have admitted in my introduction to the Gita known as *Anasaktiyoga* that it is not a treatise on non-violence nor was it written to condemn war. Hinduism as it is practised to-day or has been known to have been practised, has certainly not condemned war as I do. What, however, I have done is to put a new but natural and logical interpretation upon the whole teaching of the Gita and the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism is evolving; its scriptures are evolving and suffering addition. The Gita itself is an instance in point. It has given a new meaning to Karma, Sannyasa, Yajna, etc. I have endeavoured in the light of a prayerful study of the other faiths of the world, and what is more, in the light of my own experiences in trying to live the teaching of Hinduism as interpreted in the Gita, to give an extended, but in no way strained meaning to Hinduism, not as buried in its ample scriptures but as a living faith speaking like a mother to her acting child. What I have done is perfectly historical. I have followed in the footsteps of our forefathers. At one time they sacrificed animals to propitiate angry gods. Their descendants but our less remote ancestors, read a different meaning into the word, 'sacrifice' and they taught that sacrifice was meant to be of our baser self to please, not angry gods, but the

living God within. I hold that the logical outcome of the teaching of the Gita is decidedly for peace at the price of life itself. It is the highest aspiration of the human species'. (*Harijan*, 3—10—'36).

In the same way Gandhiji tried to find authority in the Gita for the charka cult and found it. He refers to verses 8 to 16 in Chapter II of the Gita and says: 'Work here undoubtedly refers to physical labour, and work by way of sacrifice can only be work to be done by all for the common benefit. Such work—such sacrifice can only be spinning. I do not wish to suggest that the author of the Divine Song had the spinning wheel in mind. He merely laid down a fundamental principle of conduct. And reading it and applying it to India, I can only think of spinning as the fittest and most sacrificial bodily labour. (*Young India*, 20—10—'21).

When all is said one cannot forget to mention Gandhiji's fervent *bhakti* towards the Gita which he adores as the Universal Mother. He says, 'The Gita is the Universal Mother. She turns away nobody. Her door is wide open to anyone who knows it. A true votary of the Gita dwells in perennial joy and peace and knows no disappointment. But peace and joy come not to the sceptic or to him who is proud of his intellect or learning. It is reserved only for the humble in spirit who brings to her worship a fulness of faith and an undivided singleness of mind. The recitation of the Gita verses will support you in your trials and console you in your distress and even in the darkness of solitary confinement. And if with its verses on your lips you receive the final summons and deliver up your spirit, you will attain Brahma Nirvana, the final Liberation.'

# INDIAN CULTURE

*By Sir S. Radhakrishnan*

[*The following is based on a talk given by Sir S. Radhakrishnan inaugurating the series of discourses on India's Cultural Unity during the Dasara celebrations at the Ramakrishna Students' Home, Madras.*—EDS.]

I have been asked to say a few words on 'Indian Culture'.

It pre-supposes a number of things. At any rate, other people are to speak to you on its aspects in the vertical phase, Indian culture at the time of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Acharyas and later on during the Islamic invasions and the Christian times. They will be speaking to you as to how India has preserved her culture throughout all these vicissitudes of her history. My task is merely to indicate to you what may be regarded as the general characteristics of Indian culture, which are present throughout, though they may not have received the fullest expression at any particular stage. In other words, Indian culture may be regarded as a spirit or as a universal which does not find its absolute or adequate or complete embodiment at any one stage and yet animates every stage of the progress of Indian culture. That is to be regarded as the spirit of India's culture.

What are the general characteristics which you find? I wish to say one or two things about it this morning.

The first thing is that whether in art or morality or philosophy or religion Indian culture recognises the reality of something higher than body and mind. In other words, intellect is not to be regarded as the highest feature of man's life. The limits of his being

are not exhausted by his physical or intellectual characteristics. There is something deeper than mind and intellect. That art is supposed to be profound which brings out that inner living intensity which goes beyond the intellectual or the mere perceptual levels of life. Morality again is said to be deepest when it is not merely traditional or customary, when it is not merely conventional or reflective but when it springs from the depths of one's own consciousness. The one thing that is characteristic of true morality, to use the hackneyed political expression, is self-determination. In other words, your conduct must be determined by your own self. If you are faced by a conflict of loyalties—conformity to society and fidelity to the inmost being of your own nature—like Socrates, Jesus or Gandhi, you must forsake external conformity and accept loyalty to the deepest truth of your own being. The principle of self-determination put formally in this particular manner constitutes the essence of the higher kind of morality.

You have creative morality, reflective morality and customary morality. Similarly in art you have creative art, conventional art and imitative art. So in philosophy, too, it is not to be a natural philosophy based on the qualities of sense observation nor is it to be merely rationalistic but it must be darsana, something based on the insight of the seer. You will find, therefore, as a general characteristic of Indian culture, whether you take the aesthetic, the ethical or the logical side this important feature, namely that man is not to be reduced merely to a combination of senses and intellect but that there is something deeper in him.

If you apply it to religion, religion itself becomes quite different from what it is popularly said to be. It is not merely the celebration of ceremonies, the muttering of mantras, or the performing of rites but it is a change in one's own nature. In other words, it is an extension of one's consciousness, an increase of one's awareness. Its quality is not decided by the object you worship or the form you adopt but by its transforming power on the human mind. If you look at cosmic evolution you will find it has passed through several stages of matter, life, mind, intelligence, etc. We need not think that this cosmic evolution has arrived at its *finale* when you come to the human being. If the past is any clue to the future, then there is an evolution still ahead of man. That evolution cannot be on the physical side or even on the vital side. It will be on the conscious side. From animal cunning we have come to the human consciousness. From human self-consciousness it is necessary for us to go forth or proceed upwards to a larger kind of luminous consciousness, from Vijnana to Ananda, to use the expression of the Taittiriya. Religion is an attempt to enable us to transform our present consciousness into a larger consciousness where all discords and cleavages are overcome. Thus the characteristic of Indian religion is that it is more subjective than objective. It is the living up to the fullness of man's nature that constitutes the essence of religion: '*Atma prapti lakshanam moksham*'. To realise your own possibilities, to realise the possibilities embedded in your own nature, to bring out all the potentialities lurking in yourself is liberation. If you do that, you are a religious man. Religion therefore is essentially a summons to spiritual change. It is a mandate for transforming your own mind. It is not to be mistaken for its auxiliaries, worship of gods, attendance at church, temples or mosques or repeating prayers. Religion is essentially a life of the spirit. That is how we have characterised true religion from the very beginning.

When we are called upon to define what it is, we talk about Brahmadarsana, Brahmanubhava and Brahmasakshatkara. The very Vedas on which Hindu religion rests are nothing more than records of the great visions which great seers had. Sages see constantly, सदा पश्यन्ति सूरय: तद्विष्णो: परमं पदं। दिवीव चक्षु राततं. How do they see? Even as your naked eye, your physical eye sees the sky they are able to feel the presence of God. It is that kind of direct spiritual *comprehension*

of the supreme reality that constitutes the reality of religion. Thus the one distinct feature of Hindu religion is that religion is spiritual experience, spiritual transformation and that all other things which we associate with religion are to be regarded as merely aids which will enable us to bring about this kind of spiritual change within ourselves.

From this we need not rush to the conclusion that religion goes against the principles of reason. It may go beyond reason; but it never contradicts reason. There is a higher kind of rationality in this kind of religion interpreted as spiritual experience. You will see that from the very beginning there has been an adequate emphasis on the development of reason. There are people who may pretend to have knowledge of the supreme. If those people are unable to recommend it to other people on the ground of reason—reason alone has the element of universality about it—then their experiences are not validated for others however valid they may be for those who experience it. If religious experience is not grounded in reason it cannot claim for others the same kind of allegiance. Rationality therefore has been another supreme feature of Indian culture. If you turn to the Upanishads they tell you that when you accept the Vedas it is essential that you must test them by your logical reason. In addition to sravana there is manana or logical reflection. In the Gita you find the teacher saying, 'You must prostrate yourself at the feet of the teacher but subject him to enquiry.' In addition to pranipata there is paripraśna, logical examination of the statements of the teacher. The *Brahma Sutra* says that it is an enquiry into Brahman, brahmajijnasa. When someone approached the teacher he said, 'Dialectic is going to be your guide, tarka will be your rishi. Do not abandon tarka or reasoning. It is essential therefore that what is put down as the vision of the spiritual seers must be capable of satisfying the demand of reason.

Hindu religion requires us not to accept anything in blind unthinking trust. Even the greatest teachers have been subjected to severe logical examination. We are called upon to examine everything before we accept its authority. Never were we told 'Believe and do not question further'. Never were we asked to take anything in blind trust. Even the greatest teacher Krishna does not ask Arjuna to carry out implicitly his instructions. He tells him 'you must see with your own eyes. You must exercise your judgment and then do as you choose, *yathecchasi tatha kuru*. I am not going to compel you or deprive you of your right of individual judgment. After all each man here has to determine his conduct by his own judgment. So the greatest of the teachers advises his pupil to exercise his own judgment and then adopt what seems to him to be the most reasonable course to adopt. You will find therefore that rationality is equally well emphasised in our religion.

There are many today who ask us to apply ourselves to strip our spirit of all its rationality, to clip its wings and who tell us, 'It is your duty simply to accept what I say and then as a result of the life of the experiment which you adopt you will realise the truth.' But the great Buddha pointed out to us, 'Do not accept anything on hearsay. Do not accept anything on account of respect, gaurava which you have for me. Do not think this comes in parampara and therefore you must accept it. Accept it not because it is traditional, not because I say it but only because you have tested it and found it to be true.

In other words one great tradition of our culture has been this: insistence on reason. When once you have spiritual experience as the highest thing and justification of human life and when also it is said that that kind of experience is not contradictory to the other aspects of your nature but harmonises with them it follows that your philosophy cannot be a fanatical one. It cannot adopt any fixed rigidity. It cannot be dogmatic. Throughout our culture you will thus see its other characteristics have been comprehension not conflict, assimilation not negation.

Whether it is the Dravidian or aboriginal gods, or other forms we come across later in our history, it has always been the tendency of our religion to comprehend and assimilate them to the fundamentals of our faiths and never reject them as completely opposed to the standpoint which it has adopted. You will find therefore in the Rig Veda, '*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanthi*'. There is only one fundamental reality. But do not get into quarrels with others because that one reality is being approached by others in other ways. Do not imagine you have a monopoly of religious wisdom and that your attitude to others must be one of opposition. Do not adopt that attitude. In the Upanishads, you will find exactly the same thing:' शकुनीनामिवाकाशे जले वारिचरस्य च पदं यथा न लक्ष्येत तथा ज्ञानवतां गति:

As the birds fly in the air, as the fishes swim in the water, even so is the pathway to God traversed by the seeker after God. In the Gita you find, ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् I do not care for the manner of your worship or the name you give. I accept you in whatsoever manner you approach me'. In other words we may not know God comprehensively; but God knows us fully. So whatever our ideas are he is quite clear about us. Our ideas of God may be unclear or obscure but his ideas about us are complete. So there is no question of our adopting this or that view. You will find the Acharya saying, 'Whom the Saivas worship as Siva, all this is the one reality designated by different people in different ways. May that one Lord grant us our one desire. You will see in it comprehensiveness or tolerance of other points of view. That has been the third characteristic of our life.

You will find next that there is no attempt to dismiss the world as a complete unreality. This is the place from which we have to work and transform our nature. There are people who think this world is to be dismissed as a mere illusion and has no kind of existence at all. While there is justification in some of the interpretations for such a kind of doctrine, you will also find that in the orthodox Advaita Vedanta the world is given a reality which is different from the Absolute or the metaphysical but which is at the same time quite distinct from mere nothingness or a mere illusion. In the opening section on the *Brahma Suthrabhasya* Sankara says: एवमयं अनादिरनन्तो नैसर्गिको मिथ्या प्रत्ययरु:। पकर्तृत्व भोक्तृत्वप्रवर्तक: सर्वलोकप्रत्यक्ष: There he is making it out that this world which consists of subject and object which is natural to the human mind is something which is evident to the whole world. It is not to be regarded as merely an entity which is created by individuals. *Dristi sristi vada* is repudiated: He says it is a world which is common to all. It is naisargika.........the world is not abhava or non-existent because you comprehend it and you have consciousness of it and you are able to relate yourself to it. It is not to be regarded as a swapna or a mere dream. In other words he says there are regulations of space, time and causation binding this universe which are absent so far as your dream world is concerned. The world therefore is not to be dismissed as a mere swapna but at the same time it is not to be equated with that fundamental immutable metaphysical reality, the paramartha satta. It partakes of the characteristics of sat as well as asat. At the same time it is completely different from asat. Those who have reduced the world to asat are therefore violating the text of Sankara where he makes out that it is both different from sat and asat. Any attempt to reduce it merely to asat or non-entity goes against the fundamentals of Sankara's commentary. He says of this samsara that it is there as a challenge to the human individual, to rise up to transfigure it and make it into something very different. In other words the spiritualisation or sanctification of nature is the demand imposed on human beings. That involves the relative reality so far as this world is concerned. There are several ways in which this thing is brought out. I am not proposing to discuss with you all those ways. I am merely indicating to you some very broad

features of Indian culture. That means that relative reality of this world, toleration of other creeds, intellectuality and robust reasonableness of philosophy and emphasis of spiritual experience constitute the distinct marks of the religion. What we need to-day more than anything else is this emphasis on spirit and toleration. The world is in its mad fury at the present moment simply because it is scientifically very efficient but it is lacking in what you call philosophical wisdom or grasp of spiritual realities. Intrinsically the human soul apart from its appurtenances is the same. It is that kind of emphasis on the sanctity of the human soul which all political organisations are there to protect and honour. It is that which is lacking at the present moment. The second thing is the great advice which Asoka gave to us in concluding his Rock edict 12 'Concord alone is the supreme good' '*Samavaya eva sadhuh.*' We should not make the whole world think alike. Synthesis, reconciliation, concord is the supreme good. This emphasis on the spirit and comprehensiveness or tolerance are the important lessons which may serve as a corrective to the present miscarriage of the world.

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# THE PROBLEM OF PROHIBITION

*By Rajasevasakta Prof. A. R. Wadia*

Religion and philosophy have very often been taken to stand purely for the spiritual and the other-wordly and so there is a general tendency to brush aside living social problems and deal with them only in a platitudinous way. In a journal like the *Vedanta Kesari*, predominantly religious and philosophical in character, one might naturally hesitate to take up a social problem. It is only at the request of the Editor for an article of sociological interest that I have ventured to write on the subject of prohibition, which occupied so much public attention during the last Congress regimes in different provinces and which is likely to focus public attention again with the possible return of the Congress governments. Religion and philosophy, if they are to escape the charge of being barren, must grapple with such problems and discuss them not in the spirit of fanaticism, but in the spirit of sweet reasonableness.

Drink has been the traditional vice of the West. It has had no religious check and the extreme cold of these regions has given a great practical value to drinks even beyond the bounds of reasonableness. Social reformers became alive to this great evil, which brought out the cruelty and bestiality in drunkards and brought out too the martyrdom of their wives and children. With the awakening of social conscience and the spread of education the need to grapple with this evil became insistent. It became common for preachers to advise total abstention from alcohol, as the very word *drinks* had unfortunately become identical with liquor, and in the so-called fashionable society even of to-day this quaint usage still continues. It is somewhat odd that this movement against alcohol came to be called temperance; odd because this word carries with it since the days of Aristotle an aroma of the golden mean and so temperance should mean a regulated use of alcohol rather than a total abstention from it. But we have to take words as they are understood in a society, and if temperance has come to mean total abstention from alcohol, we have to accept it. It just marks the swing of the pendulum in social consciousness.

For a long time the temperance societies were content to preach and exhort their members to take to pledge to eschew all intoxicating drinks, and to influence the governments about the location of public bars and their excise policy generally so as to reduce the evil of drink as much as was humanly possible. In no European country has the temperance movement amounted to what has come to be known as prohibition, *i.e*, the forcible closure of all liquor shops and a total prohibition of the manufacture or importation of alcoholic drinks. This extreme step was taken only in the United States of America which under a self-denying ordinance went dry for twenty years. That it did some good can not be denied. In those years I met an American industrialist touring in India and enjoying his 'drinks' as any European would do. When he was reminded about the liquor laws of his own country he said that he would not go back on prohibition, though he himself did enjoy drinks, for he had found that under prohibition the efficiency of his own workmen had increased. Evidently like a good American he felt that what was productive of more dollars must be necessarily good. On the other hand it has now become a matter of history that in spite of the ingrained puritanism of certain American stocks whose vote in favour of prohibition had carried the day, prohibition had become a complete failure and had been responsible for introducing evils which perhaps its sponsors had never dreamt of. They may be briefly summarised as follows :

1. At no time during the period of prohibition was there really a dearth of liquor. It was in fact available in abundance for all who really wanted it. This became possible because it was manufactured illegally or smuggled from across Canada or even across the seas. Of course it was a risky business and to this extent it deterred normal law-abiding or timid people from indulging in drink. But to this extent all the more quantity was available for those who were daring enough to take the risks, and as every psychologist knows there is a certain cussedness in human nature, which gives added zest to the spirit of bravado to perform actions prohibited by law.

2. The very fact that millions, though in a minority, had voted against prohibition, made it easy for these millions to break the law with more or less open connivance on the part of the police and the judiciary. In other words it proved a bad financial proposition. The Government lost their excise revenue and had to incur extra expenditure on additional police to cope with the situation. But neither the police nor the judiciary proved incorruptible and the result was a more or less open defiance of law and order. This was a terrible evil, for when people can defy one set of laws they begin to lose all their old reverence for law, and law-breaking loses all the evil odour attached to it in a normal law-abiding society.

3. If the whole police force and the whole judiciary had proved corruptible, there would have been no risk at all in carrying on the liquor trade quite openly. But there were honest policemen and honest judges, who were prepared to do their duty, and so raids on the haunts of liquor were always a possibility, and gangsterism became a new profession for manufacturing liquor or smuggling it from all odd places and finally fighting the police. U. S. A. which had through a century built up a certain tradition of law and order became a victim to the outrages of gangsters and law and order became a huge mockery.

4. Where a government permits liquor trade, it is its duty to see that good liquor is sold to the public. But in the regime of prohibition such regulation and supervision were out of place and the result was that most harmful adulteration took place, and bad liquor being as good as poison, people who took it suffered from all the evil effects of poison. People who lived on the borders of Canada found it easy to cross over into Canada, have their drink and return to their homes. But those who lived far away had to be content with the stuff they got.

And what they got was bad stuff and they had to pay through their noses for it, and after all this they had not the satisfaction of having real pleasure, for bad drink did not fail to affect their health. Physical suffering and doctors' bills must have completed their discomfiture.

No fair-minded student of sociology can possibly deny that all these evils weighed heavily against the policy of prohibition and it was only a matter of time when the democratic voters swung round and voted against prohibition and U.S.A. went wet again. It must be dubbed however, a noble experiment in social legislation, and even though it failed, it has reestablished an old truth that no government can reform people by mere legislation, and that no legislation has a chance of being successful unless there is an overwhelmiug majority willing to abide by it.

It is so easy to pen eloquent denunciations of drink and paint lurid pictures of bestialised drunkards and beaten wives and starving children. But all this does not go to the root of the problem, and after millenia of high moral preaching we are still to-day as bad as our ancestors, and if we have improved in certain respects we remain still far from the ideal in several other respects. Social evils do not yield to mere preaching. They demand a practical and wise handling, which takes note of human nature as it is and instead of trying to turn human beings into angels tries to make them good reasonable human beings. An ounce of fact is worth more than a ton of theory, and it is because of this that I have thought it best to take count of the prohibition movement in the U.S.A. It would be interesting to see whether the American experiment has anything to teach us in India and whether there are any grounds for believing that India will succeed where America failed.

In India Islam has been consistently against alcohol, and even though Vedic India seems to have revelled in *soma* drink, at least under the influence of Buddhistic teaching Hinduism has developed an ascetic attitude to life and naturally enough all intoxicating drinks have come to be looked upon as an abomination. To this extent it may be conceded that prohibition has *prima facie* better chances of success in India than elsewhere. It may also be conceded that the climate of India, generally warm, does not necessitate the use of alcoholic drinks as a physical necessity. On the other hand we have to recognise that nature has endowed India abundantly with trees which yield toddy and that millions of people in the lower strata have been accustomed to toddy through the ages, and that under British influence many people of the upper and middle classes have become addicted to western drinks like brandy and whisky and beer, not to mention varied kinds of wine of less alcoholic strength. None but a fanatical puritan would deny that toddy within limits is a healthy drink, appetising and strengthening, and people who have been used to it find it most injurious to give it up entirely as required by a prohibitionist regime. No one can deny, on the other hand, that there are people who drink more toddy than is good for them. Similarly in the case of western liquors, if they cannot claim the natural health-giving properties of natural toddy, they give a certain pleasure and people who have become used to them feel that life is not worth living when they are forcibly deprived of their use. Doctors would admit that in such cases total abstention is as harmful to health as partaking too much of them. In the last resort the problem of alcohol boils down to this: what is the degree to which its consumption is legitimate and should be permitted by the State, and what steps should be taken by the State to see that people do not suffer from the evil effects of alcohol.

During the brief period of prohibition introduced into the different provinces of India, only a partisan would argue that it worked with complete success. As in America so in India too, illicit liquor trade went on merrily and those who wanted it always had plenty of it, only with this disadvantage that they had to pay heavily for it and had no right to

complain if they were given bad liquor as good as poison. Cases have been known where in the absence of liquor addicts took even to drinking eau-de-cologne, methylated spirit with obviously disastrous effects on their health. And we have no reason to believe that this experience will not repeat itself, if and when prohibition comes to be forced on the people again with the return of Congress governments.

Wise statesmanship requires a rigid control of the whole liquor trade. A high duty on all foreign liquors would tend to make them so costly that it would serve to keep the poor people away from it altogether, while the middle classes would find it economically prohibitive. The definitely rich classes would not be deterred by the cost, but it is the duty of a good government to protect the rich as much as the poor against themselves, and so a rigid system of control on the sale of liquor would prevent even the rich from drinking more than is good for them. Very luckily the exigencies of the war made such control inevitable and it worked excellently, providing a healthy check on the amount of the quantity consumed.

Toddy and indigenous liquor manufactured in India have their own problems. Under the present excise policy pursued by different governments it has become next to impossible for the ordinary consumer to have pure unadulterated toddy. The auctioning system certainly brings in more revenue, but the excise contractors out to make money and criminally callous to the question of supplying pure toddy are prepared to buy licenses at a rate which makes it impossible for them to sell pure toddy at a rate which can attract customers and also bring them a reasonable dividend. To make matters worse or rather to make matters easy for himself an excise contractor has to keep the low-paid excise inspector on his side and so has often to pay him as much a month and even more as his own departmental salary. There may be exceptions to this rule, but on the whole it may be safely said that high licensing fees do not square with honest business. A government which is prepared to sacrifice the whole excise revenue may as well have its revenue reduced to a low level which makes it possible for the dealer to give pure healthy toddy to his customers. Here again to prevent drunkenness a rationing system with all our war-time experience could be easily adopted so that no man gets more than a certain limited quantity which a normal man can take with full advantage and with no ill effects to his health. Such a regulated system would indeed go far to secure to a society good health with a modicum of pleasure and without that discontent and lawlessness and bad liquor which are the inevitable accompaniments of total prohibition. Extremes always have a tendency to meet and this is typically true of prohibition and unregulated liquor trade, for prohibition does give a fillip to unregulated trade in liquor with the added disadvantage of loss of revenue which could have been put to good social uses.

Ethics and religion generally tend to look upon men as more or less stereotyped patterns which could be moulded just as they desire, and that is why the great prophets and moral reformers proceed on the assumption that mankind could be reformed easily. But they have failed in their mission, for men are not reasonable and they are not stereotyped. They are very varied and modern psychology has brought out the extreme complexity of human nature. Regulation succeeds where a pattern compulsorily introduced fails miserably to achieve its end. Men will resent if they are prohibited from eating or drinking what they consider to be necessary for their pleasure and health. They cannot quarrel if they are even forcibly prevented from being a nuisance to others, and a man who gets drunk does become a nuisance to all. Every government worth the name has a right, because it is its duty, to see that while a gift of nature like toddy is not allowed to run to waste, it is not used by men to their own detriment or the detriment of their wives and children. Any expense incurred on securing these ends will be abundantly justified. If in every

case of drunkenness it is not the man who gets drunk that is punished, but the man who has sold him or given him liquor is punished, drunkenness will soon come to an end. Every liquor or toddy shop should be under rigid supervision. Every such shop should have its allotted customers who cannot buy elsewhere and should be under the supervision of different men so as to minimise the risk of the supervisor becoming a paid servant of the dealer himself. If men will not be honest, no system can be proof against dishonesty, but where a government fairly and squarely faces an issue, the chances of abuse are much less than when they look upon men as beings who will allow themselves to be coerced against their will even in their domestic concerns.

Life is full of evils and man is capable of reacting to them in varied ways. He is neither an angel nor a devil. He is an odd mixture of good and evil. Psychologically he is really neutral and may become good or bad as he makes a good or bad use of his opportunities. What he wants is not a total suppression of his natural instincts but a regulation of them. It may be a dream of ardent reformers to root out adultery and prostitution, but they will succeed in this only to the extent they make the laws of marriage reasonable and in comformity with the nature of men and women. If drink is an evil, as in many cases it undoubtedly is, it can be dealt with far more successfully by a judicious regulation than by totally denying its right to exist. The truth of this can be found in the recent experiences of European countries. With the steady spread of the temperance movement milk bars and soda fountains have drawn away customers from public bars. Clubs affording innocent amusements have proved successful competitors against liquor dens. The fact remains that to-day in Europe there is far less drunkenness than it used to be the case in the 17th, 18th, and even 19th centuries. Even in Russia, the native home of vodka, there is far less of drunkenness than ever before. As against this the history of U. S. A. during the twenty years of prohibition shows how rapidly the demon of drink spread to the ruin of health and honesty and orderliness.

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# KARMA CANNOT BE HOODWINKED

(*A Story*)

The end of the Mahabharata war saw the great Bhishma on the *sarasayana*, the bed of arrows. His body was covered by arrow-wounds and festering sores; but he, a monument of calm and poise, was consoling Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas. Yudhishthira, full of remorse as of the one who had caused all that bloodshed said:

*Yudhishthira*: O, grandsire, I have heard all your discourses, but tranquillity of mind has not been mine. Seeing your body bathed in blood, like a hill furrowed with streams, I am languishing with grief. What can be more painful than this, that you, O grandsire, has been brought to this plight on my account by my people fighting with each other? I think the son of Dhristarastra is fortunate in that he does not see you in this state. But I, who am the cause of your death as well as that of our friends, am denied all peace of mind by beholding you in this sorry condition. How I wish I would have gone with my departed brothers, so that I would have been saved this agony! O King, instruct me so that I may be cleansed of the sin and may have peace of mind.

*Bhishma*: Why, O fortunate one, do you consider your soul, which is dependent on God, Destiny and Time, to be the cause of your actions? Subtle and imperceptible is the soul's manifestation. In this connection is cited the ancient story of the conversation between Mrityu (death) and Goutami with Kala (time) and the fowler and the serpent. There was an old lady by name Goutami, who had great patience and tranquillity of mind. One day she found her only son dead of snake-bite. A fowler by name Arjunaka, bound the serpent with a string and brought it before her and said: This wretched serpent has been the cause of your son's death and so it does not deserve to live. Tell me how this wretch should be destroyed.

*Goutami*: O Arjunaka, please release the serpent. It does not deserve death at your hands. By killing the serpent, the boy will not be restored to life; and who would take upon himself the sin for slaying this living creature?

*The Fowler*: O, virtuous lady, you speak like a realised soul and not as one plunged in sorrow. Those who want to buy cheap peace of mind, assign everything to the course of Time as the cause, but practical men soon assuage their grief by revenge. Some people through delusion, desist from such revenge fearing loss of *punya* in the next world. O lady, be practical, assuage your grief by getting rid of this enemy of man.

*Goutami*: People like us are never afflicted by such 'misfortune'. The death of the boy was pre-destined; therefore I cannot approve of the destruction of the serpent. Brahmanas do not harbour revenge or resentment, because resentment leads to pain. So, O good man, do please forgive and release this serpent, out of compassion.

*The Fowler*: Merit is acquired, I have heard, by killing an enemy. By killing this despicable creature you shall achieve great merit hereafter.

*Goutami*: An enemy in your hands is at your mercy. Why not be a little magnanimous and forgive it and thus earn merit by releasing it.

*The fowler*: By killing Vritra, Indra secured the best portion of sacrificial offerings, and by destroying a sacrifice Mahadeva secured his share of offerings: so you also dispose of this serpent immediately without any misgivings in your mind.

The noble Goutami though repeatedly egged on by the fowler to the destruction of the serpent did not approve of the sinful act. The serpent bound with the cord, sighing a little and maintaining its composure then said these words in a human voice:

*The Serpent*: O foolish Arjunaka, you little think that I have no will of my own and am not independent. Mrityu (death) sent me on this errand. By his direction, I have bitten the child and not out of any anger or choice on my part. Therefore Mrityu is responsible for this and if there is any sin in it, it is his.

*The fowler*: How can that absolve you from the sin of the act. As an instrument you must share the sin. In the making of an earthen vessel the potter's wheel, the rod and all other things are regarded as causes. You are one of the causes and so you are guilty and deserve death.

*The serpent*: The potter's wheel, rod and other things are causes no doubt; but not independent causes. All these factors working together produce the effect. So if you think that there is any sin it must be shared by the aggregate of causes.

*The fowler*: Anyway, you have acted as the immediate cause, and — so you deserve death.

*The Serpent*: But you forget that I would not have acted at all, without the instigation of another, Mrityu.

At this stage, Mrityu appeared on the scene and addressed the serpent thus:

*Mrityu*: Commanded by Kala (Time) I, sent you on this errand, and neither you nor I am the cause of this boy's death. Even as the clouds are tossed to and fro by the wind I am directed by Kala. All

creatures, mobile and immobile, in heaven and on earth are moved by the power of Kala. The whole universe is under His sway. All actions and abstentions are said to be influenced by Him. Surya, Soma, Vishnu, water, wind, the deity of a hundred sacrifices, fire, earth, Mitra and Parjanya, rivers and oceans are all created and destroyed by Kala. Knowing this how do you blame me?

*The Serpent*: I do not, O Mrityu, blame you nor absolve you from all blame. I only aver that I have done the act influenced by you. Whether any blame attaches to Kala or not, it is not my business to consider. Even as I am interested in saving myself from blame, I am interested in you also.

Now the serpent turned to the fowler and said: You have listened to Mrityu. It is not proper that you must torment me like this.

*The Fowler*: Indeed, I have listened to Mrityu and I come to the conclusion that both of you are the cause and deserve punishment.

Then Kala (Time) made His appearance and said;

*Kala*: Neither Mrityu, nor this serpent, nor I am guilty of the death of any creature. We happen to be the immediate causes of the event. O Arjunaka, the karma of this child was the root cause which pushed us on to action in this matter. There was no other cause for the child's death: It died as a result of its own karma in the past. As for that matter, we are all subject to the influence of our respective karmas. Karma, is an aid to salvation and karma also denotes virtue and vice in man. As men make from a lump of clay whatever they wish to make, even so do men attain to various results dictated by karma. Therefore, neither you, nor I, nor Mrityu, nor the serpent, nor this old Brahman lady is the cause of this child's death. He himself is the cause here. Upon this the Goutami became convinced that men suffer according to their actions. She addressed the fowler thus:

*Goutami*: Neither Kala, nor Mrityu, nor the serpent is the cause of my child's death. This child has met with its end as a result of its own karma. I may have also contributed to this effect. So, O Arjunaka, please release the serpent soon.

*Bhishma*: (To Yudhishthira) Then Kala, Mrityu and the serpent dispersed and Goutami became consoled in mind as also the fowler. You also, O king, give up all grief and attain peace of mind! Men get to heaven or hell as a result of their own karma. This evil of the war has neither been solely your creation, nor of Duryodhana's. That the war-lords were killed is their own karma.

Hearing these words of Bhishma, Yudhishthira became consoled and gained peace of mind.

---

# TO THE WINDS

*By Tandra Devi*

Wild wind
Blowing through trees,
Blowing wild over the hills,
Rushing and whistling through valleys

Wild, rushing wind—
Storm-wind
Circling the fields,
Swirling over waters,
Scuttering in dry bushes,

Raking the parched grass,
Snapping brittle twigs
Among the thirsty hedges,
Madly tossing the arms
Of long poplars—
Wild, wild wind
Blowing through trees
Blow thy message to the heart!

Storm-wind
Sighing in full blasts,
Crashing through branches,
Flying among the leaves—
Full, free wind!
Blow a clean call
To the old world's heart
Dry and dreamless heart,
Tired from long drought,
Blow thy clean call,
Stormy wind!

Rain wind
Singing to the thirsty earth,
Pour the tumultuous music
Between clouds!
Beat out thy dance
In the little clouds—
In the small shredded clouds
Rushing before thee!
Sound thy shattering trumpets
Before the towering embattlements
In tall, tall clouds—
Rising about thee!
Shake the tall clouds
Drive them on!
Beat!
Dance!
Pour out thy cascades
Of tumultuous music!

Shrieking, echoing, cooeing wind—
Pulsing, flowing, rolling, whistling wind
Open dark places!
Blow into deep recesses,
Renewal, cleansing!
Break out, glad music
In deep, dark places!

Flinging through barriers—
Flinging on . on -
Galloping in the valleys,
Neighing across wide spaces.
Flare out,
Thou elemental roar!
Burgeon in the forests—
Among orchards and the rocky wastes.
Break over the ranges
Above swift waters—
Climb!
Climb to thy heights,
O galloping wind!

Blow—
Noble, cooling, kind, encircling wind!
Blow the clear dawn into my eyes
Wind-blown dawn
After long night—
Breeze-dappled,
Pale green and gold.
Breezes blowing light rain in my face—
Comfort in the plain
Perfumes at my casement.
Misty dews spangling cobwebs
Dawn-swept dews
Wind-cooled earth.
Ah, thou wild wind blowing through trees!
Welcome, dewy wind
Blowing dawn over the hills!

Strong gales and furious hurricanes,
Friendly lingering gusts
Softly roving the skies,
Sweet, glorious airs,
Give us your secret!
Breathe your insistent message to the heart:
*Come with the winds to the Endless End*
*Unto peace without bourne.*
*Move with the winds about the Un-known.*
*Know the unresting rest of the winds,*
*Their homeless Home.*

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**Hinduism Outside India:** By Swami Jagadiswarananda. Published By Sri Ramakrishna Asram, Rajkot, Kathiawar. Price Rs 2-8-0. Pages 262.

'Hinduism is a religion condemned to die, but determined to live' concludes a book on Hinduism from the pen of a Western writer. A testimony to Hinduism's will to live, love and absorb, so amply proved by her phenomenal spread in South East Asia and the Indonesian Islands and by her cultural conquests of the West is a much-needed inspiration today when in the land of her birth she is treated as the unwanted old grand mother and outside as a prisoner at the bar. Expansion is life and Hinduism will continue to live inspite of the 'Verdicts' from rival faiths and the apostasy of her own children.

The book opens with a philosophical and historical survey of Hinduism in India through the ages from the Vedic times. The next chapter, Hinduism Abroad, from the pen of Swami Gambhirananda is a masterly retrospect of Hinduism's triumphal march in South-East Asia, Java and Borneo. We read in papers today that the nationalists in Java and the Indonesian islands are determined to win back their independence by non-violent means as their brothers in India are doing. Should we search for further proof of India's cultural influence in S. E. Asia fructifying in practical spheres?

In many parts Shaivaism became the state religion while Vaishnavism and Mahayana Buddhism had their due importance. Hindu art and architecture and even Hindu philosophy made a tremendous appeal in the Colonies. But after all the influence was only skin-deep. When the Mother country failed to maintain a constant flow of inspiration and counteract the machinations of other religions, Hinduism could not keep high its head for long Thus Hinayana Buddhism drove away Hinduism from Burma and Indo-China and Mohamedanism drove away Hinduism from Malaya and Indonesia.

The succeeding chapters on the spread of Hindu influence in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Indo-China, Phillipines, Java, Bali and Malaya are very interesting and instructive where the author brings to focuss his wide reading. The last two chapters are devoted to the Two Americas and and the modern West. While the cult side of Hinduism appealed to S. E. Asia, the cultural and philosophical aspect appealed to the rational West.

The author by his faithful evaluation of Hindu genius and a survey of its appeal has done real service to this Mother-religion and her sons. The book is timely and valuable as it will help to lift the drooping hearts of Hindus and to clear the mist from hostile, prejudiced eyes.

**Free-India**: PUJA NUMBER, PUBLISHED BY SRI E. R. GOVINDAN, SALEM. PAGES 62.

The *Free-India's* Dasara inspiration has crystallised into an sumptuous Special issue. The opening article, Homage to the Mother, presents the Mother in her various glorious aspects. As usual it has got its attractive features of modern science and screen. Contributions from the pen of Mr. Pothan Joseph, the famous columnist and Svetoslav Roerich, the Russian artist, deserve special mention. The number contains many pictures and good reading fare.

**How Man became a Giant.** BY M. ILIN AND E. SEGAL. KITABISTAN, ALLAHABAD. PP. 278, PRICE, RS. 5-4-0.

This delightful book, is meant for young readers who have not yet acquired sufficient knowledge in the Organic Sciences to understand the strictly scientific description of the evolution of the present civilization. As is quite clearly said in the Foreword: "About the evolution of man and the growth of civilization, there are many books. But most of those written for grown-ups are by specialists for specialists, and most of those for young people tend to insult the intelligence of their prospective audience." The author has successfully attempted to retell the story in such a way that the account does not cloud the young reader's understanding by a parade of highly specialized knowledge. It is with this psychological motive that the book has been undertaken

Combining a vast knowledge of Zoology, Archaeology, and Anthropology, the author has presented the scientific and dry facts in a most vivid and dramatic manner. How primitive man, unlike the other animals, escaped from the invisible cage of limited capacities during the great Ice Age and emerged from the crude forest habitation to lands of green pastures, how through his discovery of tools extended his powers over nature, and how his natural groupings in herds made him acquire new powers of speech and social sense which in turn gave birth to the highly complicated rural and urban civilizations, have been narrated with moving human interest and a keen dramatic sense, pointing to the tremendous achievements of man and his immense potentialities in the future. The whole story of evolution, vast and staggering, is here laid bare concisely and clearly, without harm to historical and scientific fact with new vision and imagination.

By a strict scrutiny of the existing knowledge of ancient languages, still used among some primitive tribes in Africa and elsewhere, the author with keen insight reveals the fascinating growth of speech and then writing, which is the effort of man to give a permanent value to his passing thoughts. The creation of literature, especially poetry and drama, is then traced to superstition and religion, which is said to have grown out of magic. The book is consistently materialistic from cover to cover, as may be gathered from many passing remarks which the author makes here and there. The author finds in 'necessity' the key to all evolution. In fact the book may be described as an illustration of one of Engels' sayings (quoted by the author) that it is work that has made man what he is now. Of course it has been assumed that there is the instinct of self-preservation in man. But is there any answer to the question, why should man try to live at all? What is the urge in man that binds him to life and has forced him to enact this grand drama? This question, the materialist has conveniently taken as an axiom. We are asked to have a strictly scientific outlook and consider matters as they are. Nevertheless the question stands For an answer to this question we must look elsewhere. No amount of explanation concerning how an event takes place will be adequate to the consideration of why it takes place like that. Materialists very often forget this. On the whole the book is quite enjoyable.

C. V. ANANTARAMAN.

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# NEWS AND REPORTS

## THE DASARA CELEBRATIONS

Mother Durga was worshipped at the Math with special puja, homam and other paraphernalia.

At the Students' Home a series of lectures on the cultural unity of India and contributions to it of men and movements was delivered in connection with the Dasara celebrations. The inaugural address (a summary appears elsewhere in this issue) was given by Sir S Radhakrishnan. The last one in the series, the contribution of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement to the cultural unity, was from Swami Vimalananda. Musical entertainments by prominent artists were also arranged.

## THE COSSIPORE GARDEN HOUSE

### Ramakrishna Mission's Appeal

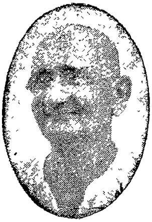
The nucleus of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was formed in the Cossipore garden house (90-90/2, Cossipore Road, Calcutta), where in the year 1886 Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna spent the last days of his glorious life with his disciples, and entered into Mahasamadhi. Foremost among these disciples was Swami Vivekananda, whose contributions to the spiritual advancement of the world are well-known. The house and its compound of about 3½ acres, where they used to live in the service of the Master and practise spiritual exercises under his divine inspiration, have been intimately associated with his hallowed memory. The disciples and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and the general religious-minded public of diverse faiths look upon this site as a place of pilgrimage, and visit it from different parts of India and abroad. But unfortunately they do not get an easy access to it, and besides find the atmosphere of the place wholly irreligious. For not only are the premises not properly looked after, but their sanctity is also being violated by various acts of desecration.

Swami Vivekananda wrote to one of his brother-disciples on the 13th July, 1897: "Don't you think it will be nice to purchase Krishnagopal's garden at Cossipore?......In my opinion it is advisable to do so. All our associations are with that garden. Indeed it was our first monastery".

For the above reasons we have decided to open a branch of the organisation on the site and preserve the house as an international memorial to Sri Ramakrishna. We have already applied to the Government for acquisition of the property, and nearly 2½ lakhs of rupees are urgently required to work out the scheme.

We earnestly appeal to the generous public as well as to our friends and sympathisers to lend us a helping hand in materialising this noble object. Contributions will be thankfully accepted by: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P. O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah.

(Sd.) SWAMI MADHAVANANDA,
*Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission.*



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